

# Transgender Equity Council Minutes

Regular Meeting

December 9, 2021 - 05:00 PM

Online Meeting

**Members Present:** Kenzie Weller (Co-Chair), Hunta Williams (Co-Chair), Dianna Anderson, Melissa Burner, Ameera Khan, Billie Kurek, Galen Mitchell, Olivia St. John, Taren Wood, and Destiny Xiong (Quorum - 8)

**Members Absent:** Davis Senseman, Mae Brooks, Becca Sanborn

**Others Present:** Destiny Xiong, Shunu Shrestha, Melissa Lund (interpreter), Koko Chino (interpreter), Jason Bucklin, CM Phillipe Cunningham

**Staff :** Track Trachtenberg

**Call To Order - 5:10 PM**

1. Roll Call.
2. Adoption of the agenda.

## Discussion

3. Recommendation updates and next steps
  1. Budget
    1. \$7500 for Minneapolis Employment and Training's LGBTQ+ Competency Trainings for providers – were able to find this money in the existing Community Planning and Economic Development budget; didn't even need a budget amendment
    2. \$25,000 for housing inspectors overtime to give property owner anti-discrimination trainings – CM Ellison was planning to bring forward the amendment but didn't have enough support from Regulatory Services department leadership. Leadership and Budget staff said they would be more prepared for this work by the time American Rescue Plan Act Phase 2 funds are allocated in mid 2022 and he is planning on holding them to their word then
      1. TRACK will follow up with staff to see what preparation needs to happen between now and then
    3. \$3.5 million of American Rescue Plan Act funds went to Office of Violence Prevention and \$250,000 of ARPA funds went to Office of Performance and Innovation's alternatives to policing work
    4. MPD budget was not cut; in part due to court order that required the City to hire back up to the minimum number of police officers (attorney's guidance was that any number MPD gave as an estimate for what that hiring would take, was a number that we needed to fund)

## 2. Tenant Opportunity to Purchase

1. Ordinance draft is strong and they're going through a community engagement process and hoping to pass it in Council next year. Getting it sufficiently funded will be a bigger push than just getting it passed. It would be phased in as funding and staffing becomes available – very dependent on funding and staffing
2. There is currently an exemption for units in 1-4 unit properties that are owned by a landlord with 5 or fewer properties. CM Ellison and some community members are interested in decreasing this exemption down to maximum owning 2 or 3 properties, rather than 5
3. Want to make sure that this actually benefitting the tenants it is theoretically designed to serve – financial education, supports for looking into the process of homeownership, matching gaps in funds or supporting with credit scores, etc.
4. Track will keep TEC updated on opportunities for advocacy around language or general passage/funding as this moves forward
5. Currently the only returning author is CM Ellison but multiple incoming CM's are interested in co-authoring

## 3. Safe use sites

1. CM Ellison is asking City Attorney's Office to look into legal possibility
2. New York City just opened the first official safe use site in the country, which will create a new legal example for this work
3. Multiple incoming progressive Council Members are interested
4. Next steps include relationship-building with organizations who would want to be involved, finding staff with the capacity to hold this work, and finding more legal experts on the topic
5. Previously voted on a TEC letter to City Council two months ago – not sure if it's strategic to send it and risk getting the opposition ahead of the work
  1. Can we get documents on NYC and other cities that have gone through more above-ground legal processes?
  2. Hold off on sending it until we have more legal examples and backing, and until new Council is in office and we have a sense of where they are at. Don't want to wait too long though
  3. Think getting the opposition on board won't just be about legality, but also about perceptions of crime, etc. Want to make sure that the letter pushes that this is a solutions-based approach
  4. This was attempted in Philadelphia and the Department of Justice stopped it. Biden has now said he is supportive, so maybe DOJ won't go after it – but it's not actually legal
  5. Useful research from TEC – legal routes and local legal experts
  6. Voted 10 in favor, 3 absent, none opposed to hold off on the letter for now

## 4. Other recommendations

1. State has a budget surplus – can the City access that? Don't think so; only American Rescue Plan Act funding (which has to be for COVID relief)
2. Potential recommendation for future work – Kenzie was recently in a work training on weight bias and discrimination and learned that only Michigan and a handful of cities have weight and size as a protected class. Currently legal to be discriminated against in MN based on your weight or size. Would love to explore changing that – likely a conversation with Civil Rights?
  1. Track will connect Kenzie, Dianna, Olivia, Billie to Civil Rights
  2. Are there other boards we can connect to on this? Looks advantageous politically to hear this advice from people who are seen as “directly connected” in ways the TEC is not
    1. Full list of City boards: <https://lms.minneapolismn.gov/Boards>
    2. One of the TEC recommendations was to get a listserv of boards so that is easier!
    3. Please connect to other community advocates as well – doesn't have to be boards
  3. See attached recommendations document for updates on other recommendations that have made progress

[Final - Fall 2021 TEC Recommendations to Council - Updates](#)

4. Trans Issues Work Group updates
  1. Finalizing the contract attachments that would create trans equity guidelines for the shelters/social service organizations we fund. Track has met with contract managers; they will be going through Gender Inclusivity 101 training as well to get more subject-matter familiarity. Hoping to pass this in January or February in City Council
5. Adopting 2022 meeting calendar: 2nd Thursdays (1/13/22, 2/10/22, 3/10/22, 4/14/22, 5/12/22, 6/9/22, 7/14/22, 8/11/22, 9/8/22, 10/13/22, 11/10/22, 12/8/22) from 5-7 PM
  1. 10 in favor, 3 absent, none opposed, motion passes
6. Goodbyes and Welcoming New Members
  1. Shannon had to step down from MPS seat
  2. Hunta's last meeting! Big thank you for two years of leadership as a co-chair
7. Executive Sponsorship Update
  1. Boards need an executive sponsor to be created but not after that, so don't need to find a new one on Council as CM Cunningham leaves office
  2. Big thank you to CM Cunningham – for starting this board and his logistical, policy, and moral support throughout this process since the very beginning. Will be missed in office

**Presentation**

8. Jason Bucklin, Out4Good, Minneapolis Public Schools – *Hunta*
  1. LGBTQ Program Coordinator at Minneapolis Public Schools (Out4Good program)

2. Out4Good started in 1996; one of six schools in the nation to do this (and St. Paul was another). In the last 10 years, school districts across the nation are starting to take on this work more regularly. The reason this work is still newer to school spaces is because of the propaganda around queer and trans educators being predators
3. Students: Gender and Sexuality Alliances (23 in the district, although some things have shifted with COVID and distance learning); events (Q-Quest – LGBTQ student conference, last time it was in person it reached 1000 students; Queer Prom; Youth Pride – in partnership with MN School Outreach Coalition; Spirit Day – beginning of the year kick-off, done with Queer Space Collective); students organizing an all-gender restroom campaign (37 of the 72 schools have all-gender restrooms; have recruited a group of 200 students to help push this campaign)
  1. Is there legislation that protects trans youth specifically? There was a situation in Hastings where a youth was outed – is there something the TEC can put on our recommendations?
    1. In Hastings, a parent outed another parent’s child. This is adults putting young people in harm’s way
    2. It’s been a long time since people have regularly challenged books in our school’s libraries, and now, around both gender identity and critical race theory, that’s growing again
    3. Legislatively, when the Safe and Supportive Schools Act passed (2012ish), gender identity and sexual orientation became protective classes in all of our schools – free from discrimination, harassment, harm, and differential treatment. However, we can go above and beyond that and have a trans inclusion policy. Mpls and St. Paul went about their policies differentially – Mpls updated all gender-related policies to explicitly say “whichever gender is asserted.” St. Paul created a specific trans inclusion policy (and they got a lot of parent, community, and teacher buy-in in that process – but their policy is easier to knock down politically than the Mpls policy, because it’s not woven into every other policy). Really useful that the District lawyers are supportive, also
4. Staff: trainings (Gender Inclusive Classrooms 101 – inside schools and for every new hire; Dangerous Intersections: How the Gender Binary Upholds White Supremacy Culture - new as of last two years); consultations when schools reach out (more outreach this year about homophobic and racist comments between students than in past year – likely trauma response to the past few years, and we need to provide the supports that young people need so that they don’t push their trauma onto each other); equity coordinator for elementary school portfolios (working with schools’ equity and engagement teams to develop plans around racial equity and gender justice)
  1. In addition to doing trainings with new hire orientation, when someone brings an issue to Jason, he can use that as an opportunity to get in front of the whole staff to do professional development

2. Also give relevant literature to staff during trainings so that staff have redirection strategies to students' comments and lessons to bring into the classrooms
3. Hard to pinpoint percentage of educators trained because turnover rates are so high. At this point, Jason has trained in almost every school
5. District: policy (Gender Inclusion policies updated in 2014, changed student database a few years ago so names and pronouns can be reflected on documents), Gender and Sexuality course piloted last year at Edison and Henry HS (may be the first in the state of MN), all-gender restrooms campaign
6. Work that's coming up and still needs attention:
  1. Students have gotten a lot of attention in this work, but staff need support – MPS's retention for trans employees is very low. Staff who leave generally say it's not about students, but about other staff members who create an unsupportive environment. Trying to find opportunities for staff to build community across schools; trying to update HR policies
7. Have been involved with Summit and TEC since the beginning
8. Restrooms – is there any work overlapping with local Deaf and residential schools (MN State Academy for the Deaf in Faribault, etc.)?
  1. Not super familiar because they're outside of Minneapolis Public Schools – but, when we can do something in one district, other places in the state can replicate that model. Idea would be to propose those models to the MN Department of Education, and then have them push for better restrooms in buildings outside of the Cities
  2. Safe and Supportive Schools office at Department of Education could maybe take that on as a component of their work when working with other buildings – when they set guidelines, it helps other schools adopt those
9. How do the TEC and MPS work together? How can we work with other people at MPS than just Jason?
  1. Track and Jason check in once a month – feel free to send things over for that check in!
  2. Can the TEC send a conveniently timed follow-up letter to school board members after students speak to school board in January? Just as residents of Minneapolis. Get this to be a funding priority
    1. TRACK – flag this for a follow up letter from TEC!! Students are presenting on January 11<sup>th</sup>

3. Jason is trying to recruit a new TEC representative – but everyone is very over capacity because MPS has over 300 staff vacancies. Maybe bring in an interim representative if no one can do it long term for now

**Adjournment - 7:03 PM**

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